

## ATTACHMENT E

### COMMUNICATION TIPS WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR DEAF-BLIND

#### How do I communicate with a person who is deaf?

- **Get the person's attention before speaking.** First, call out the person's name. If he or she does not respond, then use a tap on the shoulder, a tap or gentle shake of the desk or table, a wave, a flick of the light switch, or any kind of visual or tactile signal.
- **Begin the conversation with the topic of discussion.** If the person knows the subject matter to be discussed, it is easier for him or her to follow the conversation.
- **Speak slowly and clearly in a normal fashion.** Do not yell, exaggerate or over-enunciate because exaggeration and overemphasis of words distort lip movements, making lip-reading more difficult for the person.
- **Look directly at the person when speaking.** While talking, avoid turning away to write on a blackboard or pull something from a file. Avoid pacing or walking around the room. If you must do these things, give the person a cue that you are interrupting the conversation for a moment. For example, say, "Excuse me while I pull your file." Then you should stop talking until you face the person again.
- **Do not place anything in or near your mouth when speaking.** Smoking, pencil chewing, and putting your hands in front of your face make it difficult for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to follow what is being said. Do not put things like the newspaper or books in front of your face. Mustaches and beards also conceal or hide the lips.
- **Use the words "I" and "you."** When you communicate through an interpreter, do not say "Tell him..." or "Does she understand?" because an interpreter is only a link between you and the other person. The person who is deaf or hard of hearing is the one to whom you are speaking.
- **Avoid standing in front of a bright background.** Glare from a window or bright light causes your face to be lost in the shadows. This makes it almost impossible for the person to lip-read or see signs. Both the speaker and the interpreter should stand in front of a solid color background that contrasts with the interpreter's complexion and has sufficient lighting on the interpreter for the person who is deaf or hard of hearing to see him or her.
- **First repeat, then try to rephrase a thought.** If you have problems being understood or if the person only missed one or two words the first time, one repetition usually helps. If a particular word seems to be the problem, choose a different word. Use paper and pencil if necessary. Getting the message across to people who are deaf or hard of hearing is more important than how it is delivered.

- **Use pantomime, body language, and facial expression.** These are essential to communication with people who are deaf or hard of hearing and help to show feelings in any conversation.
- **Be courteous.** If the telephone rings or someone knocks at the door, excuse yourself by telling the person who is deaf or hard of hearing that you are answering the phone or responding to the knock. You can indicate the interruption with an open palm or by holding up a finger. Do not ignore the person and carry on a conversation with someone else while the person who is deaf or hard of hearing waits.

### **How do I communicate with a person who is hard of hearing?**

While many of the above communication tips benefit individuals who are hard of hearing, it is especially important to remember the following:

- Because a person who is hard of hearing relies heavily on residual hearing for communication, you should speak clearly and try to get away from distracting noises.
- Turn down the volume of the radio or television (or turn it off) if necessary while talking to the hard of hearing person.
- Be willing to talk into a person's assistive listening device, when requested.

### **How do I communicate with a person who is deaf-blind?**

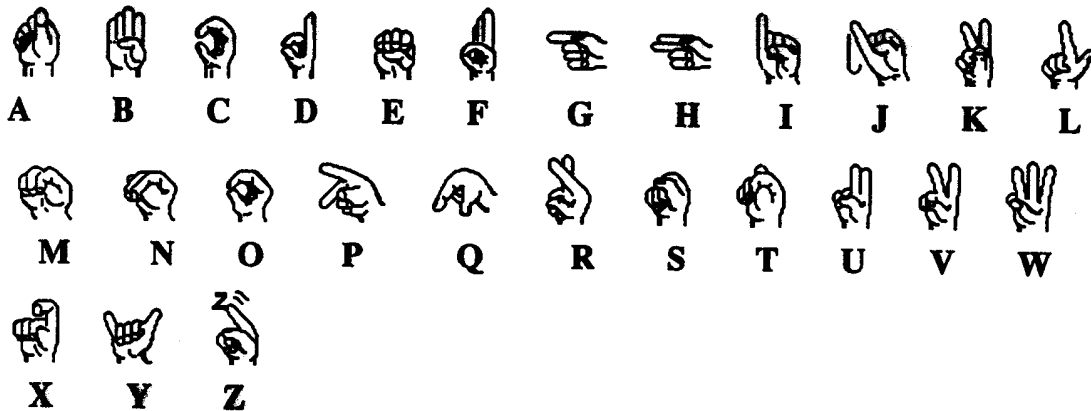
When you meet a person who is deaf-blind, most of the above communication tips still apply, in addition to the following:

- Because it is necessary to be very close to or have physical contact with the person who is deaf-blind during the communication, distractions should be kept to a minimum. For instance, have little or no jewelry, clean hands, short fingernails, and light or no perfume.
- Good lighting is crucial for the individual who has usable vision. For example, in a restaurant the diner who is deaf-blind should sit at a table with a lamp rather than in a dim corner.
- If the person who is deaf-blind indicates willingness to communicate by pen and paper, a black felt-tip marker should be used, and large print is best.

### **What is fingerspelling?**

Fingerspelling is a method for demonstrating the alphabet on the hand. It is most often used to represent proper names and places or English words that do not have a sign. Exact words can be spelled out, letter by letter. Fingerspelling should not be substituted for American Sign Language, which has its own vocabulary, grammar

and syntax, which are unrelated to the English language. The following is a representation of the manual alphabet:



Always ask people who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind if they prefer written communication as an alternative mode of communicating. Do not think that this is the only way to communicate with them. When using writing as a way of communicating with people who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind, be aware that their English reading and writing skills may vary widely depending on their educational background, the teaching method used in the schools they attended, and the communication method they prefer. The following are some tips on how to have effective written communication.

- **Keep your message short and simple.** Establish what you're talking about, avoid assumptions, and make your sentences short and to the point. It is not necessary to write every word. Short phrases or a few words are often sufficient.
- **Do not use "yes" or "no" questions.** Open-ended questions ensure a response that allows you to make sure your message was understood.
- **Face the person after you have written your message.** If you can see each other's facial expressions, communication will be easier and more accurate.
- **Use visual representations.** Drawings, diagrams, etc. help a person understand.

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